CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing product support services comprising:

authorizing a first party to receive service by providing a service account to the
party containing login identification information;

providing tokens for the first party to purchase to be used in exchange for
support services and authorizing the first party to allocate the tokens to other parties
designated at the first party's discretion;

accepting the tokens from the first party's designee, and;

providing support services to the party possessing the tokens in exchange for
the tokens.

2. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:
all authorizations are provided over a computer network.

3. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:
the tokens are provided and exchanged electronically over a computer network.

4. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:
the tokens are purchased and their cost differs based on a volume purchased.

5. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on a
characteristic inherent to the party exchanging tokens.

6. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the time of
day it is exchanged.

7. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the date it is exchanged.

5   8. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the type of support services supplied.

9. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

10   the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the duration of the support services supplied.

10. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

the identification information is a unique multi-digit alphanumeric character

15   string.

11. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

the types of support services provided are Internet based services, telephonic based services, and field based services.

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12. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

the other parties are not employees of the first party.

13. A method of providing support as in claim 12 wherein:

25   the other parties are not certified users of the product.

14. A method of providing support as in claim 1 wherein:

the other parties are not certified users of the product.

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15.   A product support system comprising:

means for authorizing a first party to receive product support services by providing a service account containing login identification information;

means for providing tokens to the first party to be used in exchange for product support;

means for accepting the tokens and login identification from any party possessing them in exchange for the product support services, and;

means for delivering product support services to the party possessing the login information and exchanging tokens.

16.   A product support system as in claim 15 wherein:

the means for providing, accepting and exchanging tokens is a computer network.

17.   A product support system as in claim 15 wherein:

the party possessing the login information is not an employee of the first party.

18.   A product support system as in claim 17 wherein:

the party processing the login identification is not a certified user of the product.

19.   A product support system as in claim 15 wherein:

the party possessing the login information is not a certified user of the product.

20.   A product support system as in claim 15 wherein:

the means for authorizing the first party to receive product support services is an acceptance of an electronic application on a computer network.

21.   A method of providing product support services comprising:

providing an online application for product support services;

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processing the application for approval or denial based on predetermined criteria;

instructing an approved first party to designate a representative who is authorized to open and manage a service account for the first party;

5   instructing the representative to apply online to open the service account;

instructing the representative to designate a buyer for issuing online purchase orders for the purchase of tokens;

providing the representative with unique identification and passwords to supply to the buyer;

10   instructing the representative to designate an allocator;

authorizing the allocator to designate a technician who may receive the product support service;

instructing the allocator to provide the technician with the identification, tokens and passwords, and;

15   providing product support services to the technician in exchange for tokens after approval of identification and passwords.

22.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:

the product support services are Internet based, telephonic based and field

20   based.

23.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:

the service account is electronically managed through the Internet.

25   24.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:

token allocation, token usage, and token balances are monitored in real time by a party selected from the group consisting of the first party, the representative, and the allocator;

30   25.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:

the representative, the buyer, and the allocator are the same entity.

26.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:
the technician is not an employee of the first party.

27.   A method of providing support services as in claim 26 wherein:
the technician is not a certified user of the product.

28.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:
the technician is not a certified user of the product.

29.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on a
characteristic inherent to the party exchanging tokens.

30.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the time of
day it is exchanged.

31.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the date it
is exchanged.

32.   A method of providing product support services as in claim 22 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the type of
support services supplied.

33. A method of providing product support services as in claim 21 wherein:
the exchange of tokens for support services differs in rate based on the
duration of the support services supplied.

34. A product support system comprising:

an application for product support;

means for accepting the application from a first party for approval or denial based on a predetermined criteria, and;

5   a computer network for: transferring the approval of an application, which contains login identification and passwords composed of an alphanumeric character string, from a support service provider to the first party; providing tokens to be purchased by the approved first party from the support service provider; transferring and receiving tokens to and from the first party and the support service provider, and;

10   receiving tokens from any designee of the first party in exchange for product support services whereby the approved first party is identified by the login identification and purchases tokens which are then distributed to the designee who, in turn, returns the tokens in exchange for product support services from the support service provider.

15   35.   A product support system as in claim 34 wherein:

the application is provided electronically online.

36.   A product support system as in claim 34 wherein:

the first party designates a representative who is authorized to open and

20   manage a service account;

the first party transfers the login identification to the representatives;

the representative designates a buyer for issuing online purchase orders for the purchase of tokens from the support service provider;

the representative provides the buyer with the login identification and

25   passwords;

the buyer designates an allocator who designates a technician;

the buyer transfers the tokens, login identification and passwords to the allocator; and,

the allocator transfers the tokens to the technicians who exchanges them for

30   product support.

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37. A product support system as in claim 36 wherein:
the technician is not an employee of the first party.

38. A product support system as in claim 37 wherein:
the technician is not a certified user of the product.

39. A product support system as in claim 36 wherein:
the technician is not a certified user of the product.

40. A product support system as in claim 34 wherein:
the designee is not an employee of the first party.

41. A product support system as in claim 34 wherein:
the designee is not certified for the product.